

Cyclo-cross



'Dig in Around the Dock' Cyclo-cross Race, Bo'ness, 29 January 2012

Edinburgh-based fire officer, David Lines – who also rides with the Endura/Pedalpower squad – finished second in Sunday's race held, as the name suggests, around the dock area in Bo'ness. All the more remarkable is the fact that, not only had he just finished a night shift with the Service, but he had turned up early on the Sunday to help the organisers set up the course, before racing his way to a very impressive result! So, cyclo-cross? What's it all about? For the uninitiated, cyclo-cross is the 'original' form of off-road bicycle racing – before mountain bikes were invented – run as a mixture of riding and running over a closed circuit and, rather than 'x' laps, is usually for a time period plus one lap e.g 55 minutes + 1 lap, as was the weekend's race at Bo'ness. The course, on casual inspection, looked to be flat and fast, with few areas to tax the competitors. However, along with the mix of grass, gravel tracks, mud and cobbles the team behind the race had inserted a couple of hurdles, used a set of steps and had a section of track running along a 45-degree banking just to make it that bit more difficult. With the race enjoying an entry list of 100 riders from elite to complete novice riders, the start was going to be a nervous affair for the guys at the front. A clean get away ensured that the elite riders put a bit of distance between themselves and the rest so they didn't get tangled up at the tricky sections. First back around, and with several metres gap to second, was Davie Lines. With a neat dismount, he hopped over the first hurdle, but was maybe a bit keen to get his bike back on the ground. Catching the back wheel on the second hurdle, he almost fell, but managed to keep his feet and maintain the gap to carry on in the lead. Most of the other top riders cleared the obstacle, but a bit further back one or two came down and one rider found himself wrapped around the circuit marking tape as dozens of rivals streamed past. Everything settled down for a few laps and a lead group of 6-7 riders, including the

eventual top-three, gradually pulled clear. At about half way Rapha Condor Sharp rider, James McCallum, had found himself a wee gap and was trying to get away on his own. Meanwhile, the top women rider, Eileen Roe (IBIS), was well clear of her nearest rival – only a few minutes down on the race leaders – and looking set for victory in the women's race.

With 20 minutes still to race Lines and Gareth Montgomerie of GT Racing had clawed their way back to the leader and with the three sharing the work at the front (pictured), it looked as if the race would come down to the final lap. With the commentator winding up the spectators as they came through with one lap to go, McCallum had a slight gap over Montgomerie, with Lines trailing a further few seconds back in third. Both riders must have made a tremendous effort to pull McCallum back on the circuit as the three came off the cobbles and into the the finish straight within touching distance. However, James McCallum just had the edge over the other two and crossed the line a couple of metres clear to take the race and well deserved first prize. Cyclo-cross is a fairly rare sport in that the average man-in-the-street-rider or, indeed, the complete novice can compete on the same day, on the same track and at the same time as Elite and International riders. Everyone mucks in and there is no 'elitism' from the top competitors. They will, at some point catch the back-markers, sometimes depressingly quickly, but passes are always carried out with, what seems to be, the utmost courtesy. A wee call of 'On your right/left' does the trick and sometimes with a bit of traditional cyclist's encouragement of 'Dig in!'

For the first-time organisers, David Hamill and John McComisky, the event was an enormous success. With around 100 competitors, from as far away as Mull, and their back-up teams, as well as many local spectators, they probably couldn't have hoped for a better turnout. Support from several bicycle related businesses, including the Tri Centre in Edinburgh and Hardie Bikes from Fife, ensured that there was a good prize pot to go round. And with a raffle at the end, a fair number of people came away with something, other than sore legs, from the day. Results –

Men's Podium was – 1st James McCallum (Rapha Condor Sharp), 2nd Davie Lines (Endura Pedal Power), 3rd Gareth Montgomerie GT Racing.

Women's Podium was – 1st Eileen Roe (IBIS), 2nd Maddy Robinson (VC Moulin), 3rd Morven Brown (Dales Cycles). Report and Photo – John Preece

Web – <http://www.photoboxgallery.com/jlp-photography>